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(12) **UK Patent Application** (19) **GB** (11) **2 317 478** (13) **A**

(43) Date of A Publication 25.03.1998

(21) Application No 9619715.7

(22) Date of Filing 20.09.1996

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(51) INT CL⁶
G09F 19/00, G06K 17/00

(52) UK CL (Edition P)
G4H HJ HSU HTD H1A H13D
U1S S2273

(56) Documents Cited
GB 2163581 A WO 97/20277 A1 WO 88/05578 A1

(58) Field of Search
UK CL (Edition O) G4H HJ HSU HTD
INT CL⁶ G06K, G09F
ONLINE:WPI

(54) Apparatus for product promotion

(57) Apparatus for the promotion of a product comprises means for displaying an advertisement of a product, and means for dispensing a discount coupon for the advertised product. The means for displaying an advertisement may include an electronic display screen which is controlled by a microprocessor to generate a plurality of different advertisements. The display screen may display an advertisement of a different product related to a product scanned by a bar code reader. The means for dispensing a discount coupon may include a printer, which under the control of the microprocessor, prints discount coupons for the advertised products.

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The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1995

This print takes account of replacement documents submitted after the date of filing to enable the application to comply with the formal requirements of the Patents Rules 1995

APPARATUS FOR PRODUCT PROMOTION

The present invention relates to an apparatus for product promotion.

5 It is known to promote products by way of printed advertisements in newspapers, magazines or the like. Such advertisements may include a coupon for the reader to cut out and use to obtain a discount when next purchasing the advertised product.

10 The problem with this type of product promotion is that the consumer may forget to cut out the coupon from the newspaper or magazine. If he or she does cut it out, he or she may lose the coupon, or may forget to produce the coupon when purchasing the product.

15 The present invention provides apparatus for the promotion of a product, comprising means for displaying an advertisement of a product, and means for dispensing a discount coupon for the advertised product.

20 The means for displaying an advertisement preferably can display a plurality of advertisements and the means for dispensing preferably can dispense a corresponding plurality of coupons.

25 Typically, the apparatus is located in, or close to the store in which the product can be purchased. For instance, the apparatus may be located at in-store customer help points, at the end of shopping aisles or preferably attached to the customer's shopping trolley or basket. Alternatively, the apparatus may be a hand-held device which the customer is given upon entry into the store.

30 Preferably, the advertisement displayed by the apparatus is accompanied by an indication of where the advertised product can be purchased and in particular where the product is located in the store.

Preferably, the means for displaying an advertisement of a product responds to a control means to change the advertisement it displays. For example, the means for displaying may comprise an electronic display screen which displays a visual advertisement on the screen in response to signals from a control means such as a
5 microprocessor, which generates the advertisements.

The apparatus may include a signal receiver to receive trigger signals from locations around the store, instructing the control means to generate an advertisement for a product nearby. In this way, the advertisement draws the customer's attention to the
10 product, its location in store, and provides the customer with the option of purchasing the product at a discount, using a discount coupon dispensed by the apparatus.

Preferably the means for dispensing a discount coupon can generate a plurality of different coupons. For example, it may include means for printing the discount
15 coupon, under the control of a control means, so that a number of different coupons can be generated and printed for different products. The printing means could also print other promotional literature such as a promotional recipe.

In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further comprises means for identifying a
20 product selected by the customer for purchase. Such means might typically be a bar-code reader or scanner. Preferably, the bar-code reader generates a signal, in response to reading the bar-code of a certain product, for the control means to advertise a related product and offer the customer a discount coupon for that related product. Preferably, the advertisement is accompanied by an indication of where the
25 advertised product is located in-store.

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example.

In a first embodiment, the apparatus in its simplest form comprises a display,
30 advertising one or more products and a dispenser for dispensing pre-printed discount

coupons for obtaining a discount on the advertised product. In this embodiment, the apparatus would typically be permanently located at a position in or near the store where the advertised product may be purchased.

- 5 In a second embodiment, the apparatus is electronically operated and includes an electronic display screen for displaying advertisements. The apparatus includes a battery and internal control means, such as a microprocessor, to control the display screen. The control means may be pre-programmed for displaying pre-determined advertisements stored in memory. In this case the memory would be
10 reprogrammable.

Alternatively, the apparatus may include means to receive external signals, such as radio or infra red signals, which instruct the control means to generate advertisements for certain products. Such external signals may be transmitted on a nationwide or
15 store basis or from individual locations within the store adjacent to the product to be advertised.

In this embodiment, the apparatus includes a printer for printing a discount coupon for the advertised product. The printer may automatically print a discount coupon
20 when the advertisement is displayed on screen, but preferably the apparatus prompts the customer to push a button to print and dispense a discount coupon when a product is advertised.

The apparatus may be at a fixed location within the store, but preferably is attached
25 to the customers shopping trolley or basket. For instance, the apparatus could be housed within a unit mounted on or integral with the trolley handle so that the display is positioned conveniently for catching the eye of the customer. The apparatus could be adapted for blind or partially sighted customers by incorporating a speaker to advertise the product using sounds. Head phones could also be used in conjunction
30 with the apparatus.

- In a third and preferred embodiment, the apparatus includes a bar-code reader in addition to an electronic display screen and coupon printer and dispenser. Such user-operable bar-code readers are known and are typically provided in a hand held arrangement and used in conjunction with a display screen which displays the price of the product corresponding to the bar code which has been read, and also provides the customer with a running total of all products which have been selected and scanned. In this embodiment, the apparatus utilises the same display screen which is used for the bar-code reader, for advertisement of another product.
- Accordingly, the apparatus is programmed to respond, when certain products are scanned using the bar-code reader, to generate an advertisement for other products which might be of interest to the customer. A discount coupon for the second product may be printed and dispensed at the option of the customer.
- Preferably, the advertisement, generated in response to the bar-code of a first product being scanned by the customer, is for a second product which is associated with the first product. For instance, if the first product, selected by the customer, is chicken, the advertisement may be for stuffing, gravy granules or the like. Similarly, if the first product is washing powder, the advertisement may be for a stain remover, fabric conditioner and so on. In each case, the customer is offered a discount coupon for the second product which is printed by a printer integral with the apparatus.
- The skilled person will appreciate that the apparatus incorporating electronic display and control means could be used as a tool in other forms of product promotion. For instance, the apparatus could be used for generating a recipe, incorporating a selected product, thus advertising other products forming part of the recipe. A discount coupon for these other products might also be offered to the customer.
- A bar code and scanning system with related product promotion has been described.
- The bar code reader or scanner when reading a bar code raises the individual price

and running total. Within the unit is a screen which may be the same screen as displays the price or may be a separate screen, which displays an advertisement of goods, either related or associated with the product i.e. if the bar code for chicken is read or scanned then the unit would generate an advert for stuffing, stock cubes, 5 gravy granules or simply a promotional advert for a particular product associated or non-associated. It also incorporates a coupon voucher dispenser issuing a single or multiple coupons for discounts or special promotions for that product or any line whichever is chosen. In turn the unit has a simple dispenser of coupons, single or multiple, or alternatively it could have an integrated printer, with the option of 10 printing out a voucher at point of sale, either laser, ink bubble or thermal. Whilst bar codes or goods are not being scanned the unit could facilitate special promotions not necessarily associated with whatever has been scanned or read. This in turn could also be used for display of recipes incorporating store products with the option of having them printed at point of sale if required. It may be built as an integrated unit 15 with all the aforementioned facilities to be stationed at strategic points in the store or another option is to be built into a trolley or supermarket cart housed in a purpose built handle or on the main frame or sub frame of the actual trolley.

Many variations and modifications may be made to the described embodiments and 20 it is intended to include all such variations and modifications as fall within the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS:

1. Apparatus for the promotion of a product, comprising means for displaying an advertisement of a product, and means for dispensing a discount coupon for the
5 advertised product.
2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said means for displaying an advertisement is adapted to display a plurality of advertisements.
- 10 3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the means for dispensing a discount coupon is adapted to dispense a plurality of coupons corresponding to the plurality of advertisements which it is adapted to display.
- 15 4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 2 or claim 3, further comprising control means for changing the advertisement displayed by the displaying means.
- 20 5. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the displaying means comprises an electronic display screen which displays an advertisement on the screen in response to signals from an electronic control means which generates the advertisement for display.
- 25 6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 5, further including a receiver, adapted to receive trigger signals from external locations, the trigger signals instructing the control means to generate an advertisement in response to the trigger signal.
7. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the means for dispensing a discount coupon is adapted to generate and dispense a plurality of different coupons.
- 30 8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7, including means for printing the discount

coupon, under the control of a control means, so that a number of different coupons can be generated and printed.

- 5 9. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising means for identifying a selected product, such as a bar code reader or scanner, the means for identifying a product being adapted to generate a signal, in response to the identification of a product, such as reading the bar code of a certain product, the control means generating an advertisement of a different product in response to the signal.
- 10 10. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the apparatus is portable.
- 15 11. Apparatus for product promotion substantially as hereinbefore described and according to any one of the embodiments.



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Application No: GB 9619715.7
Claims searched: 1-11

Examiner: Mike Davis
Date of search: 29 October 1997

Patents Act 1977 Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.O): G4H (HSU, HJ, HTD)

Int Cl (Ed.6): G09F, G06K

Other: Online: WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	GB 2163581 A (CATALINA MARKETING)	-
X,E	WO 97/20277 A1 (GEMPSY FRANCE)	1 at least
X	WO 88/05578 A1 (THE SAVINGS SPOT)	"

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.